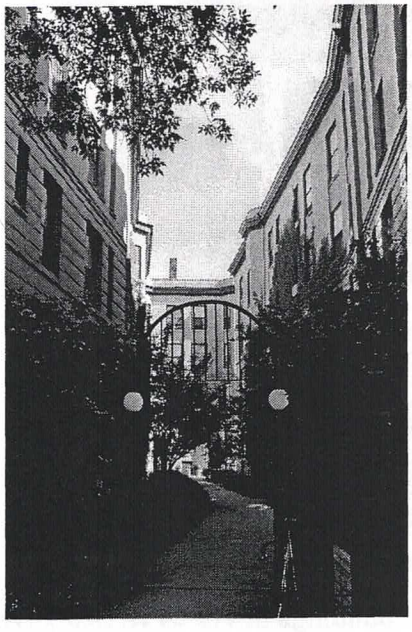
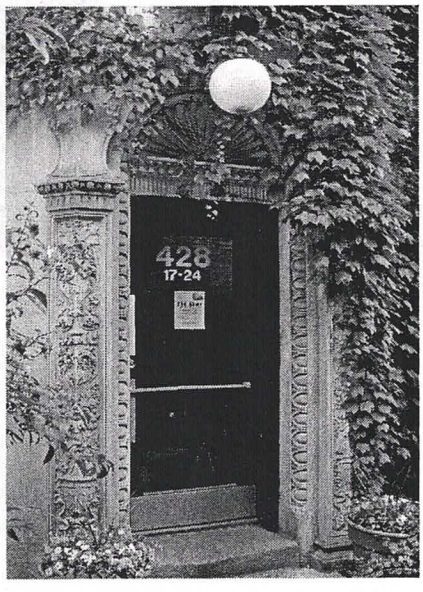
LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



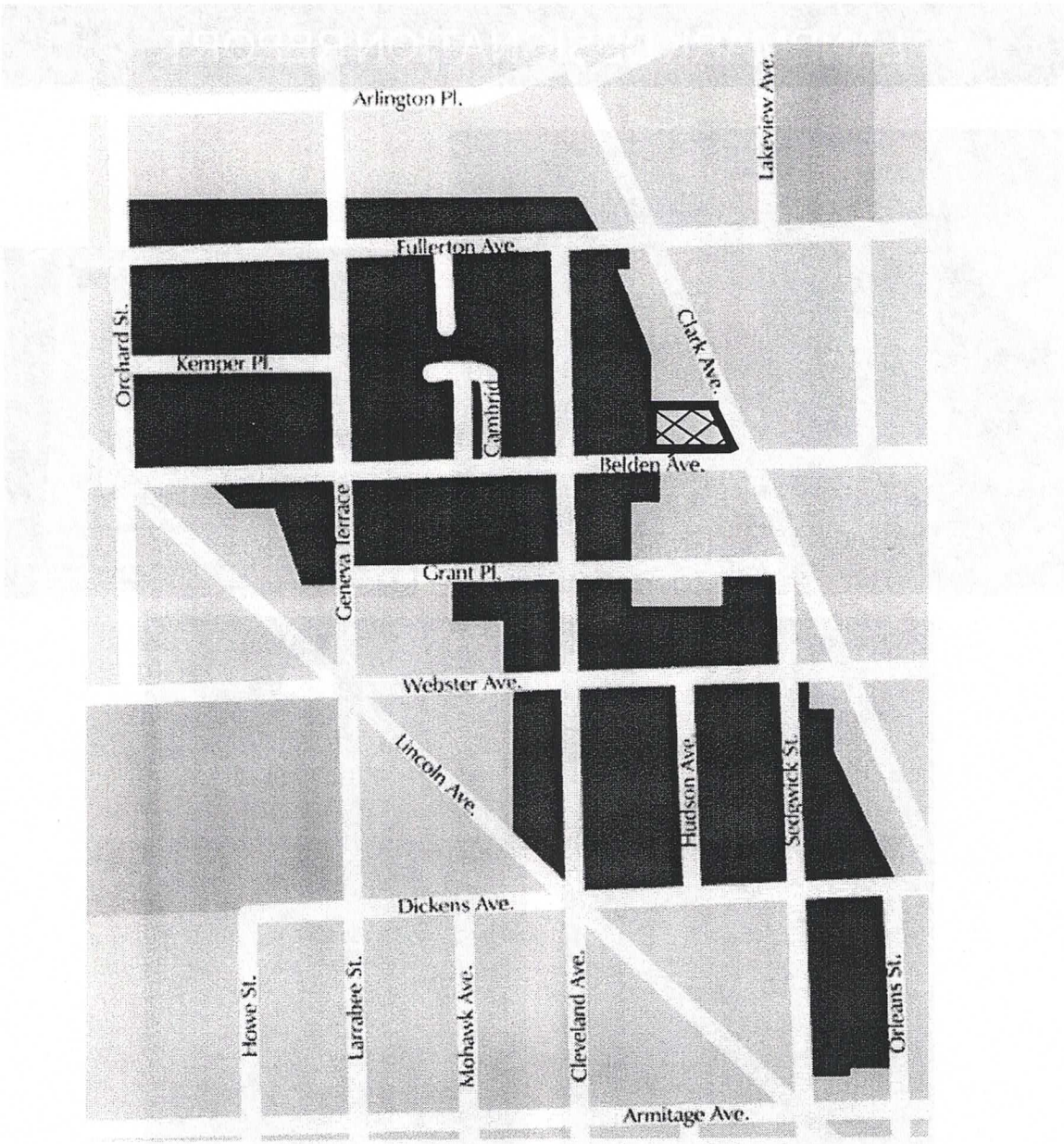


Mid-North District Extension

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in July 2004

CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Denise M. Casalino, P.E., Commissioner



The Mid-North District Extension, consisting of buildings at 418-24 W. Belden Ave. / 2300-14 N. Clark St. and 428-38 W. Belden Ave. (cross-hatched area), is located on Belden Ave. on the eastern edge of the existing Mid-North District (solid area).

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

Mid-North District Extension

Cobden Apartments
418-24 W. Belden Ave. / 2300-14 N. Clark St.
Built: **1892**
Architect: **Charles S. Frost**

Benson Apartments
428-38 W. Belden Ave.
Built: **1895**
Architect: **Samuel N. Crowen**

The Cobden and Benson apartment buildings, located on Belden Avenue just west of Clark Street, are handsome "first-generation" apartment buildings in the Lincoln Park neighborhood and exemplify the earliest development of such buildings in the area as Lincoln Park became more urbanized in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their architectural styles and craftsmanship reflect the importance of the Romanesque Revival and Classical Revival styles in the 1890s. They were designed by Charles S. Frost and Samuel N. Crowen, two architects significant in the history of Chicago architecture. Due to their age and architectural quality, these apartment buildings, adjacent to the eastern edge of the Mid-North District (designated in 1977), are being proposed as an extension of the district.

The Mid-North District holds a fine collection of late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings, a period of important growth for Chicago. This area, with its concentration of frame and brick cottages and single-family houses, brick row houses, and small apartment buildings, is typical of Chicago's residential neighborhoods that largely developed during the last three decades of the 19th century. Only a couple of wood-frame buildings built before the Chicago Fire of 1871 may still survive in the district, while residences from the 1870s were designed in the Italianate style with elaborate cornices and window surrounds. The Queen Anne style, with its variety of colors, textures, and details, later gained popularity in the district in the early 1880s, soon followed by the rough-faced stone buildings of the Romanesque Revival style. The 1890s and early 1900s saw the construction of small apartment buildings that are consistent, in their overall scale and architectural styles, with the earlier buildings of the district. The Cobden and Benson apartment buildings are fine examples of such architectural design.

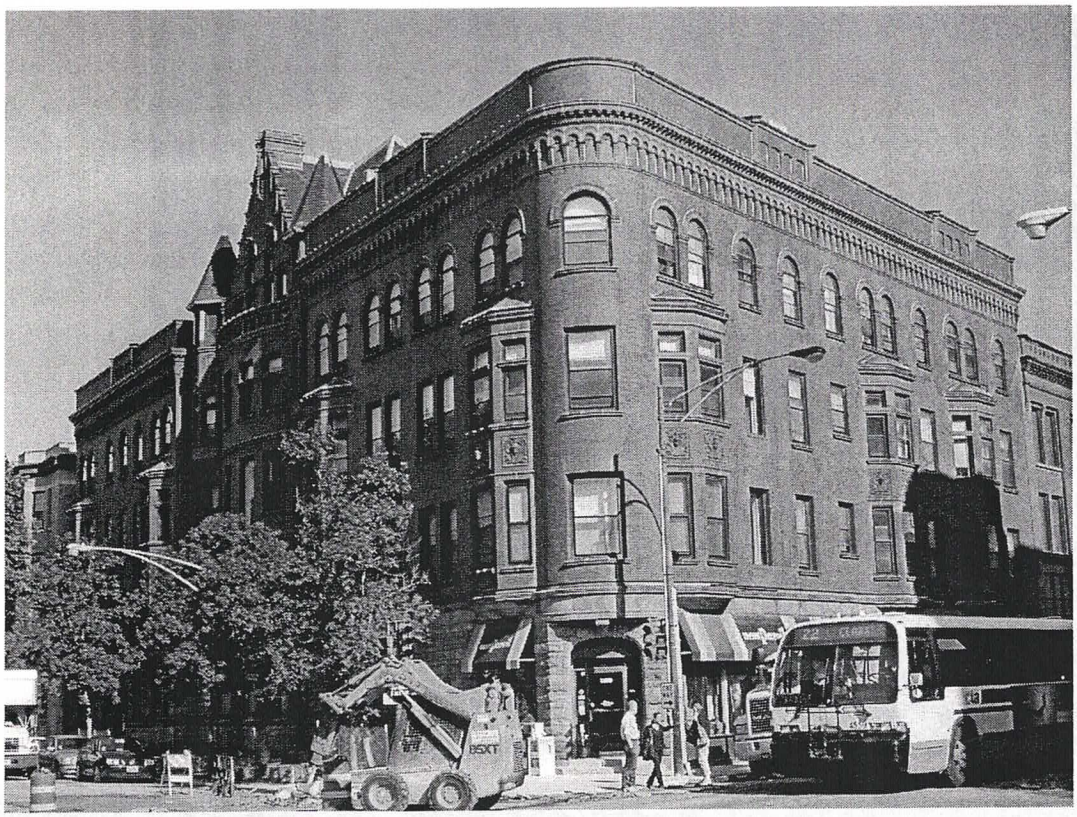
History of the Mid-North District

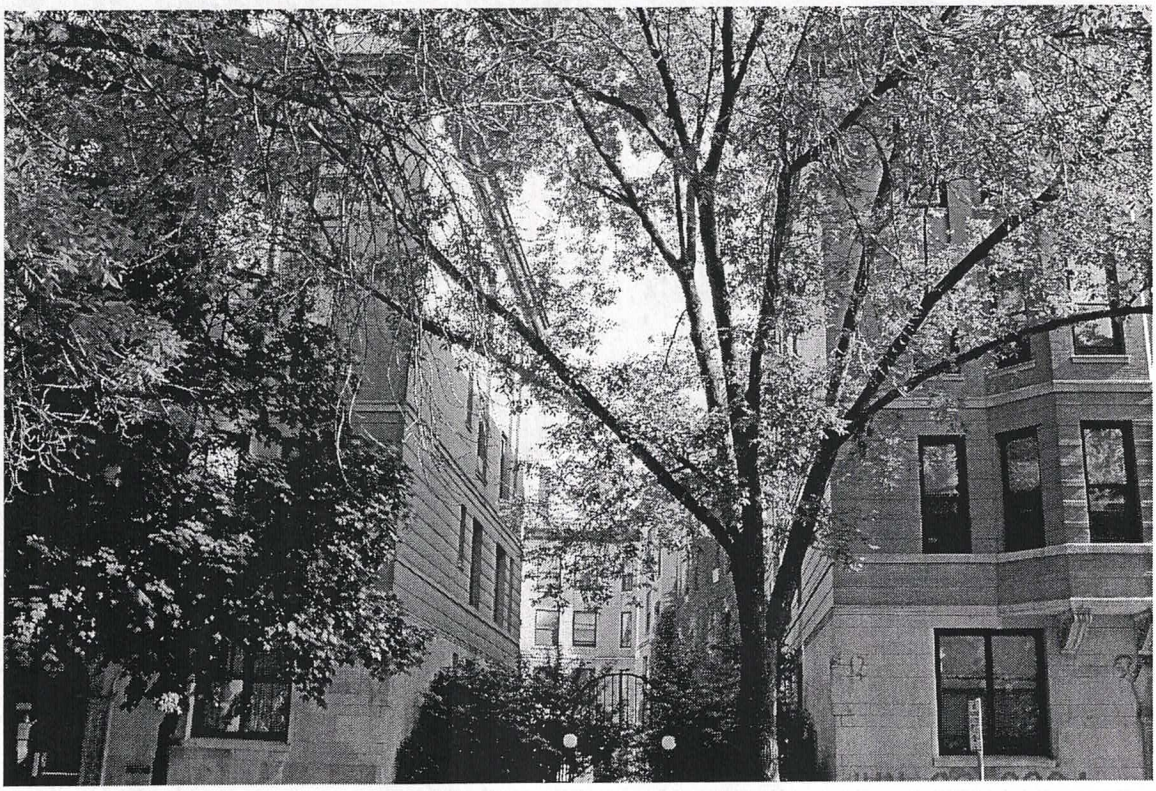
The history and architecture of the Mid-North District (designated in 1977) is contained within "Mid-North District: A discussion of the history and architectural features of this distinctive area of Chicago," prepared in 1974 by the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks (the predecessor name of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks) as part of its consideration of Chicago Landmark designation for the district. This report is attached to, and incorporated herein, this "Landmark Designation Report".

History and Description

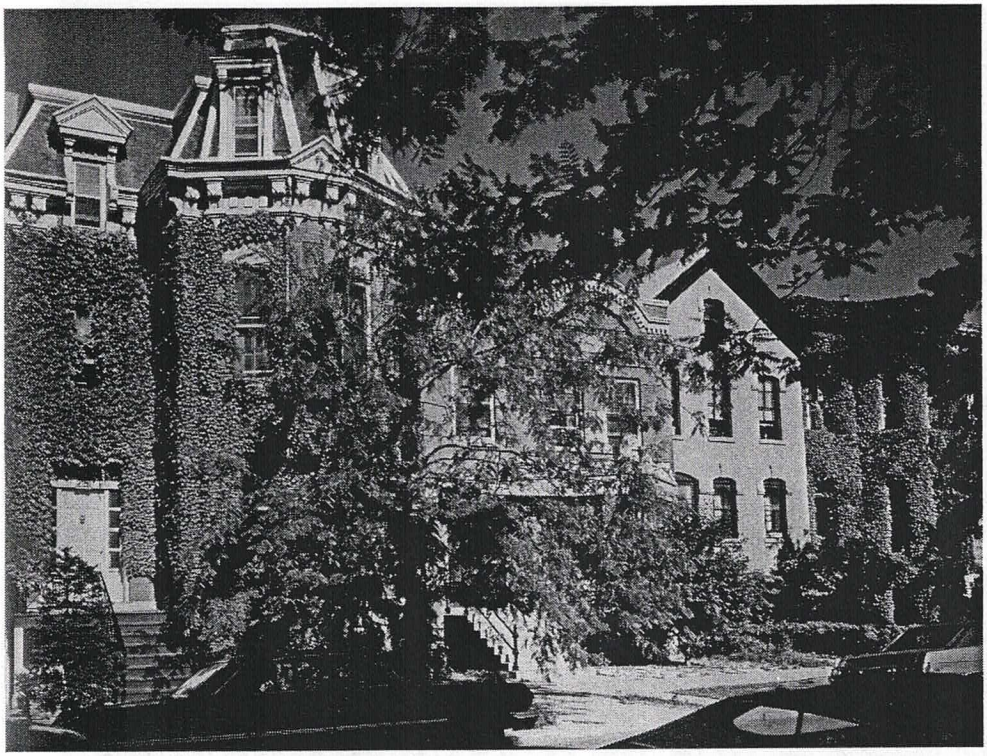
The Cobden and Benson apartment buildings, which comprise the Mid-North Extension, were built in 1892 and 1895, respectively, in the later years of the district's main period of development, which extended from 1871 (the year of the Chicago Fire, which destroyed all but a couple of buildings in the District) until the early 1900s. The construction of these apartment buildings near North Clark Street reflect the thoroughfare's importance as the location of the main streetcar line for Chicago's North-Side lakefront residents. Early horse-drawn streetcars operated along Clark St. as far north as Fullerton as early as 1861, but were slow and unreliable. One of the two North-Side cable car lines (the other was on nearby Lincoln) replaced the Clark St. horsecars in 1888, providing faster public transportation from the neighborhood to Chicago's downtown Loop. Apartment and commercial buildings subsequently began to be built along and near this line; the Cobden and Benson apartment buildings are two handsome examples.

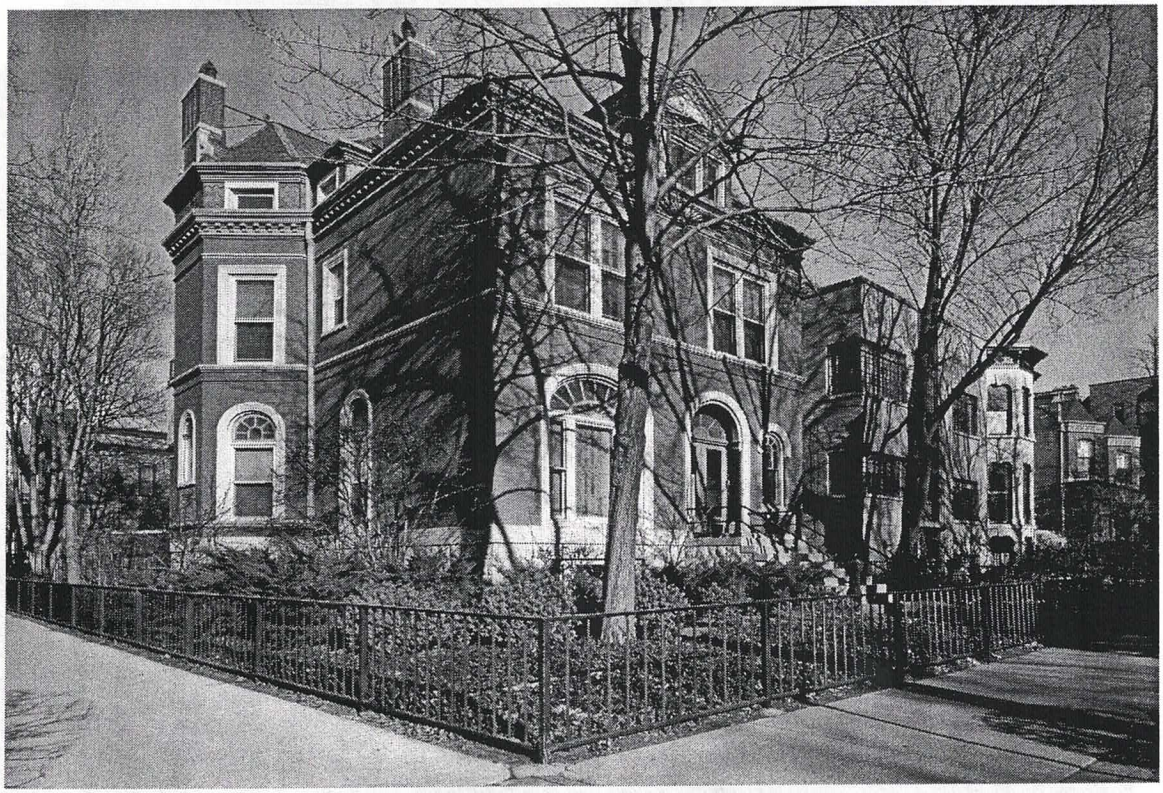
These two apartment buildings reflect the new (for the time) popularity of apartment buildings. Unlike tenement buildings constructed for the urban poor, apartment buildings (often known as "flats") were conceived as affordable alternatives to single-family houses or row houses for middle- and upper-middle-class families and were designed with amenities, both visual and practical, that such families had come to expect in their dwellings. Chicago real estate values in





The Mid-North District Extension is comprised of two buildings, (top) the Cobden Apartments on the northwestet corner of N. Clark St. and W. Belden Ave., and (above) the Benson Aartments located immediately to the west of the Cobden Apartments.





The Mid-North District (designated as a Chicago Landmark District by the Chicago City Council in 1977) is a fine collection of late 19th- and early 20th-century residential buildings in the Lincoln Park neighborhood.

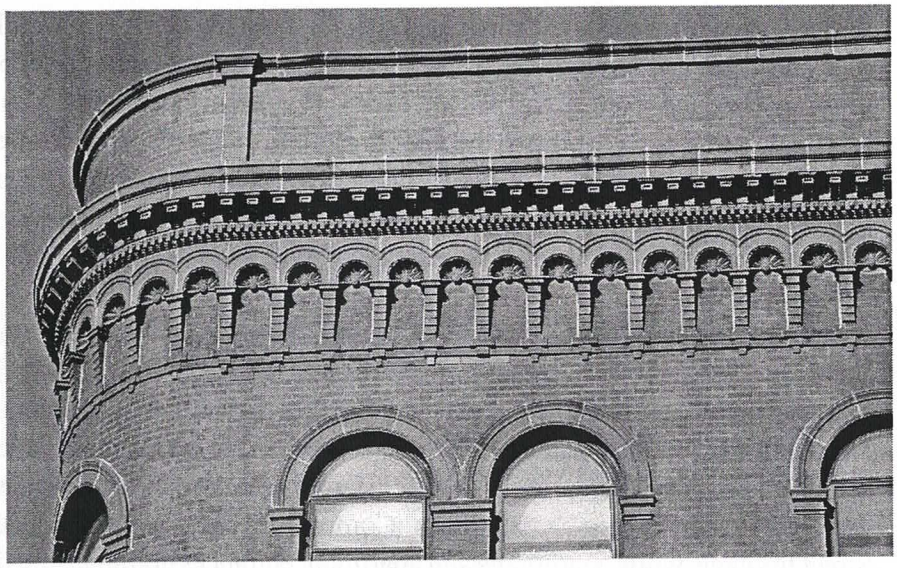
desirable neighborhoods were increasing throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and many residents increasingly found apartment living their best choice. Although apartment living developed in New York as early as the 1860s, Chicago apartment buildings for the middle- and upper-classes first were built in the 1880s. Built in 1884, the Hotel St. Benedict Flats on Chicago Ave. (a designated Chicago Landmark) is the oldest surviving example of such a finely-detailed apartment building. The Cobden and Benson, built eight and eleven years later, are handsome examples of these "first-generation" apartment buildings.

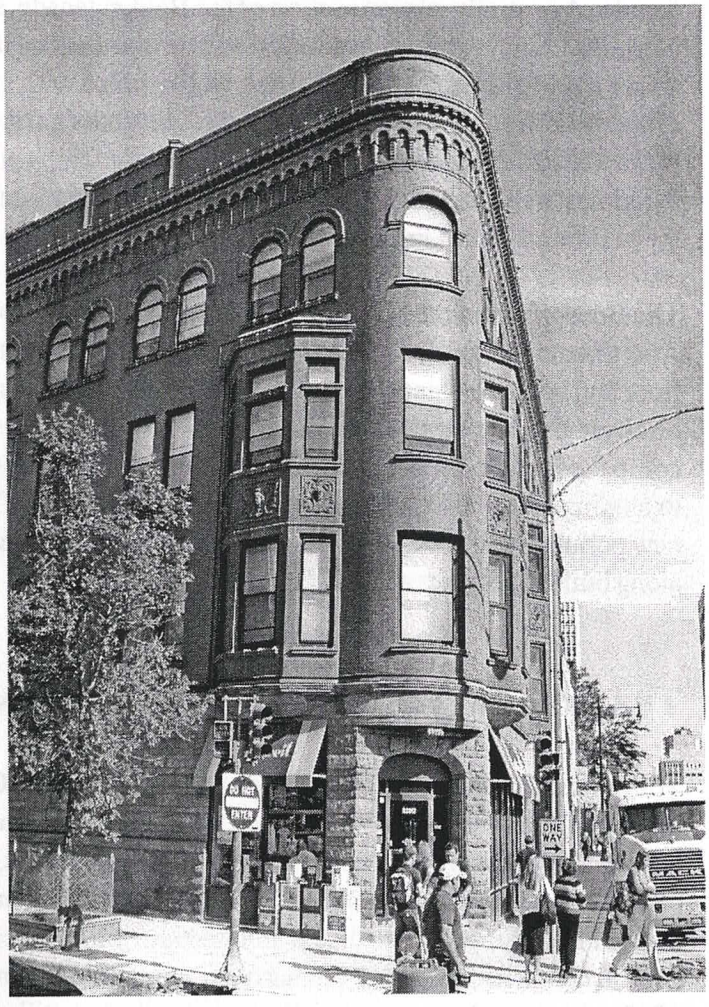
First to be constructed was the Cobden Apartments, located on the northwest corner of Clark St. and Belden Ave. It was built in 1892 to the designs of architect Charles S. Frost. It is a massive-looking structure that stretches from the Clark-Belden intersection to the alley west of and parallel to Clark. Four stories in height, the Cobden is designed in the Romanesque Revival style with Flemish Revival details. It is clad with rusticated pink granite on the first floor and deep red molded brick on upper floors. Commercial storefronts occupy the building's Clark Street frontage, while apartments and apartment entrances dominate the first floor of the Belden facade. A centrally-placed section of the Belden facade, set back from the dominant wall plane of the building, is strikingly detailed with pressed-metal bays and a stepped-gable parapet, rising above a gently-swelling curved brick wall detailed with geometric terra-cotta blocks. Wall elevations on either side of this central section curve at street and alley corners and are ornamented with pressed-metal bays and corbelling just below a broad rooftop parapet. Windows are rectangular with one-over-one, double-hung sash, with the exception of those on the building's fourth floor, which are either round-arched or have masonry transom bars.

The Benson Apartments is located on the north side of Belden Ave. just west of the Cobden Apartments and an alley. The building is also four stories in height and has a stone-clad first floor and brick-clad upper floors, although smoothly-finished gray limestone and yellow Roman brick are used rather than the Cobden's pink granite and deep red brick. The building is composed of two sections, detailed with brick-faced bays, that flank a deep, narrow courtyard extending north from Belden. Built three years after the Cobden in 1895, the Benson reflects the new popularity of the Classical Revival style with Classical-style ornament around entrances and along building corners and rooflines.

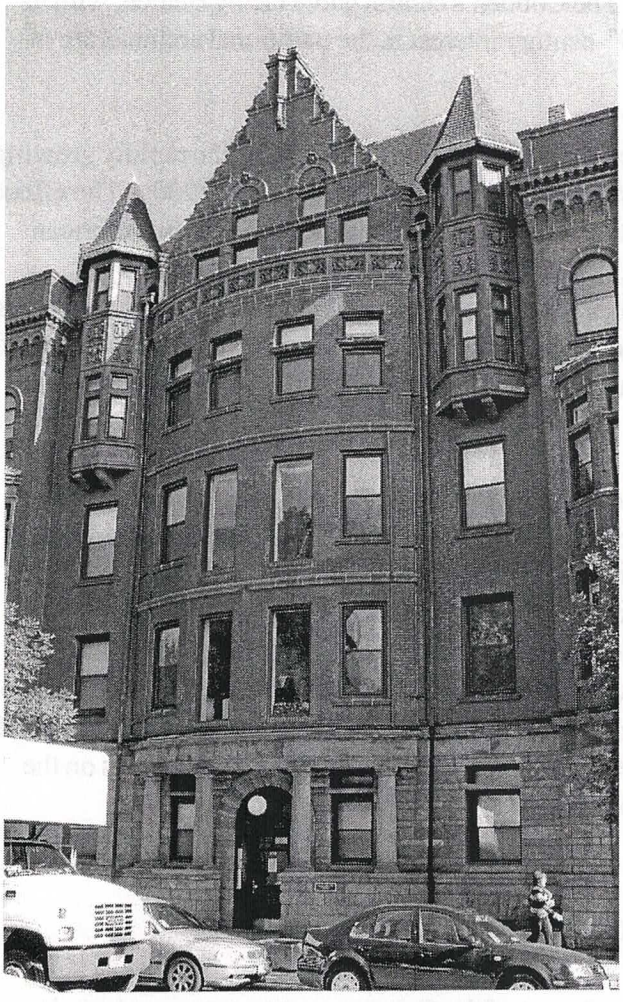
The Romanesque Revival and Classical Revival Styles

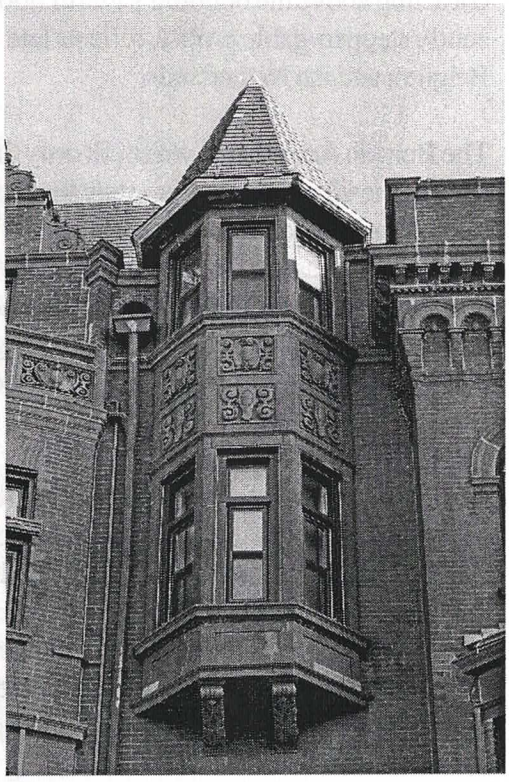
The buildings in the Mid-North Extension, including the Cobden and Benson apartment buildings, are designed in two architectural styles in fashion in Chicago during the 1890s and reflect changing stylistic tastes. The Cobden Apartments, designed in 1892, is a visually picturesque structure designed in a variation of the Romanesque Revival style. The style is derived from European medieval architecture, primarily churches, built in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Henry H. Richardson, a prominent American architect of the 1870s and 1880s, developed a personal architectural style that utilized the visual characteristics of the earlier medieval style in a simplified, strongly geometric manner. Richardson designed several prominent buildings in Chicago in the new style in the early to mid 1880s, including the John J.





The Cobden Apartments is finely detailed along its Clark street facade, including. (right) its rounded Clark-Belden corner; (above) its terra cotta bays and ornament; and (top) its brick and terra-cotta corbeling along the building's roofline.





The Cobden Apartments' Belden facade is visually dominated by a slightly setback section (above left) with a subtly stepped-gable parapet (top) and flanked by pressed-metal bays (above right).

Glessner House at 1800 S. Prairie Ave. (designated a Chicago Landmark). Due to the popularity and prestige of these and other buildings by Richardson, the Romanesque Revival became a popular style in Chicago during the late 1880s and early 1890s for a variety of building types, including commercial, residential, and institutional buildings.

The Cobden Apartment Building utilizes the Romanesque Revival style in its overall strong massiveness and visual geometry. The building's overall exterior form, with its rough-textured stone base and smooth brick upper walls, is typical of apartment and hotel buildings built in Chicago in the late 1880s and early 1890s, including the Yale Apartments, a Chicago Landmark located in the South-Side Englewood neighborhood and built in 1892-93.

Along with its overall Romanesque Revival design and details, including round-arched fourth-floor windows, the Cobden also has a variety of ornamental details that reflect the also popular Queen Anne and more rarely used Flemish Revival styles. Queen Anne visual touches include pressed-metal bays decorated with boldly-foliated panels and red terra-cotta panels and corbeling above the building's fourth floor. The Cobden's central gable facing Belden, with its subtly stepped-gable profile, reflects late 19th-century interest in the traditional architecture of Belgium and the Netherlands.

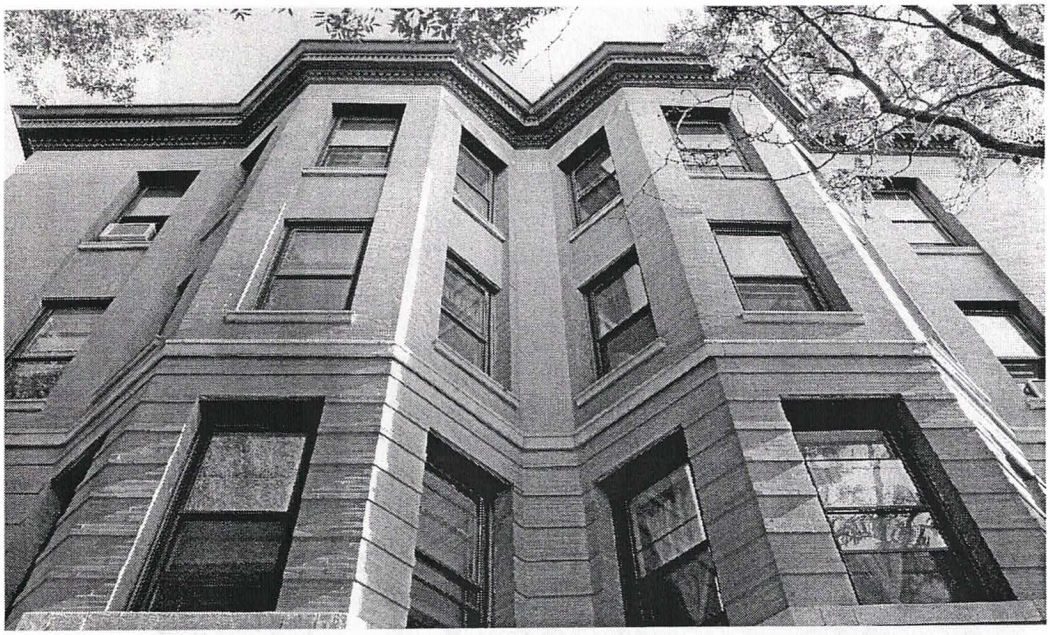
The Benson Apartments was built only three years later in 1895, but reflects the rapidly growing taste in the Classical Revival style that characterized the late 1890s and early 1900s. The effect of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, held in Chicago's Jackson Park, on American architecture was profound and long lasting. The fair's grand spectacle of Classical-style buildings decorated with Classical ornament, including pediments, columns, arches and cornices, made such architecture fashionable throughout America, including Chicago. Classical forms and details both elaborate and simple were soon being used for a variety of buildings, including the Benson Apartments.

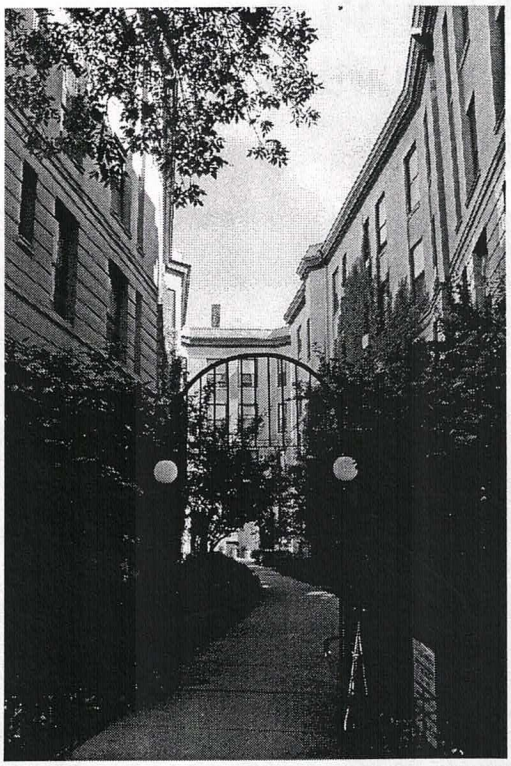
Similar in overall scale to the adjacent Cobden Apartments, the Benson also has a stone-clad base and brick-clad upper floors. It has projecting bays as well, although these are clad with brick rather than the pressed metal found on the Cobden. Simple Classical ornament rather than Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Flemish, however, ornaments the building, including pilasters around entrances, decorative medallions at building corners, and a simple metal cornice. The building acquires much of its visual appeal from the overall crisp geometric form of the building, including a long, narrow, slightly dog-legged courtyard that opens onto Belden, and the use of handsome materials, including yellow Roman brick laid in projecting courses on the second floor and smoothly laid on floors above.

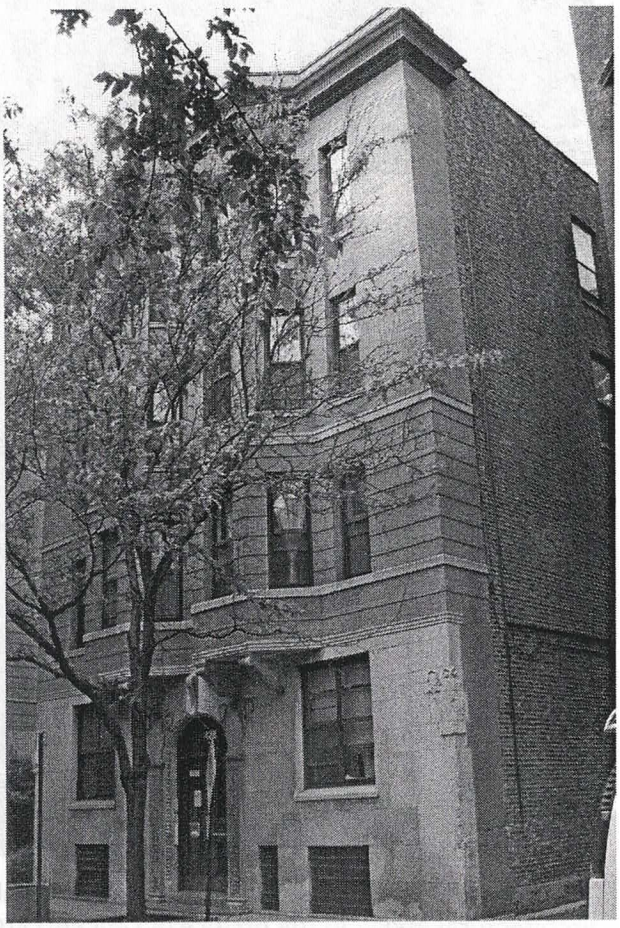
Architects Charles S. Frost and Samuel N. Crowen

Charles Sumner Frost (1856-1931), the architect of the Cobden Apartments, was born in Lewiston, Maine, as the son of a mill owner and lumber merchant. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and, upon graduation in 1876, went to work for the Boston architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns, one of the city's leading designers.

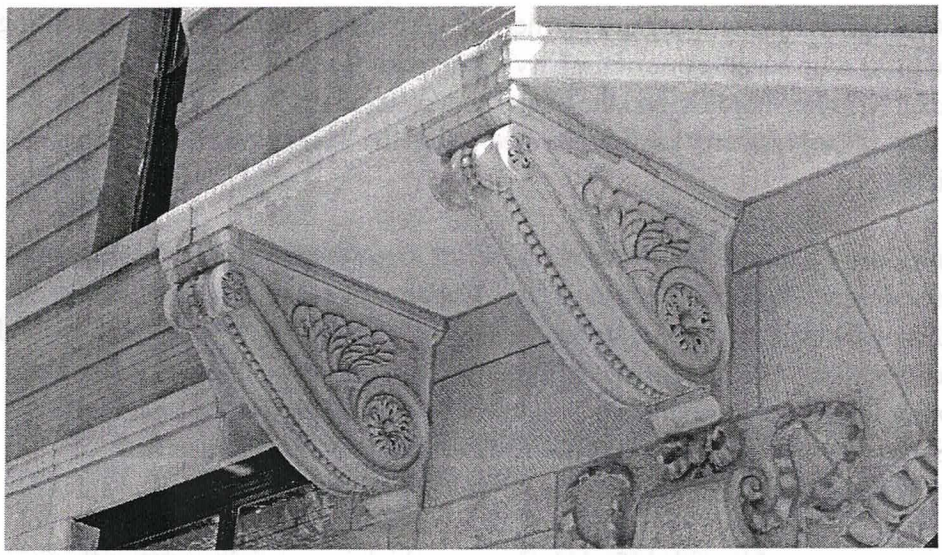
The Romanesque Revival and Classical Revival architectural styles were both important architectural styles in the history of Chicago architecture, including the development of the Mid-North District Extension. Top: The Romanesque Revival style, based on the architecture of noted architect H. H. Richardson, was used for many noteworthy Chicago buildings, including the Yale Apartments. Above: The World Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, was a seminal influence in the popularity of the Classical Revival style.

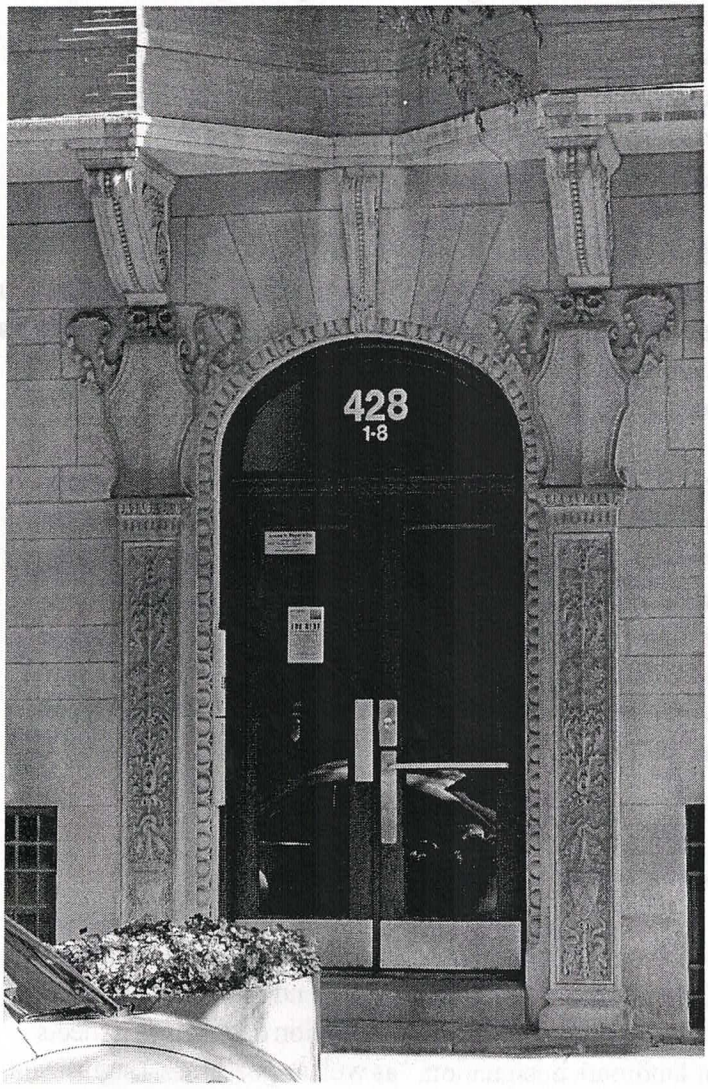






The Benson Apartments, built in 1895, is finely crafted in brick and limestone. Several views of the building, including details of Classical-style ornament around entrances.

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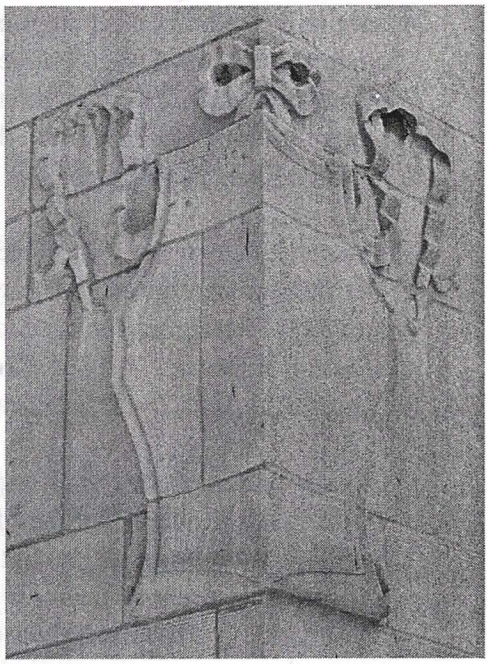


Frost moved to Chicago in 1881 and began a partnership with Henry Ives Cobb. The resulting firm of Cobb and Frost soon became one of the City's important firms, designing the Potter Palmer Mansion on N. Lake Shore Dr. and the Union and Calumet Clubs (all three demolished), as well as the Newberry Library (located within the Washington Square Chicago Landmark District).

In 1889, Frost and Cobb dissolved their partnership. Frost then practiced independently for the next nine years, during which time he designed the Cobden Apartments. Other Chicago buildings from this period designed by Frost include the Home for the Friendless, the Kenwood Club, and the Kenwood Hotel (all demolished). Frost also designed a number of handsome single-family houses in the Kenwood Chicago Landmark District, including the John Lord House at 4857 S. Greenwood Ave, as well as the Walker Library in the Morgan Park neighborhood (now a branch library of the Chicago Public Library).

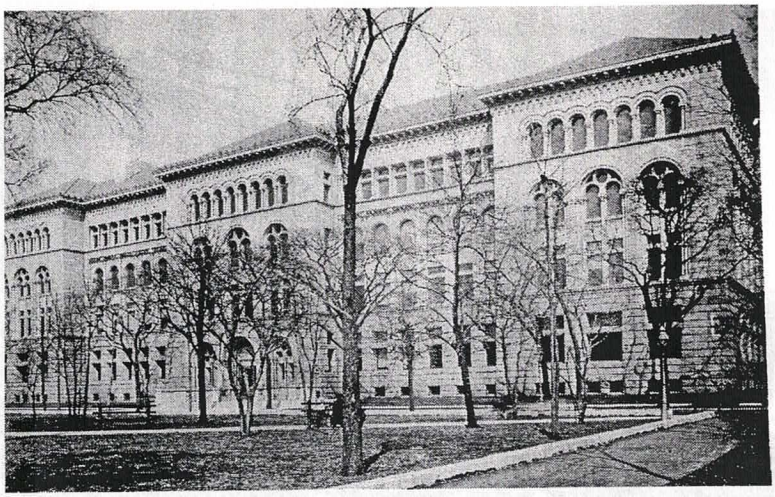
In 1898, Frost began a partnership with Alfred H. Granger which is especially noteworthy for continuing Frost's earlier ongoing work for the Chicago and North Western Railroad. Both alone and partnered with Granger, Frost designed numerous stations for the company throughout the Midwest, including Milwaukee, Rockford, and towns in Iowa, Wisconsin, and along the North Shore. One of their best-known railroad stations was the Chicago and North Western Railway Terminal on W. Madison St. in Chicago (demolished).

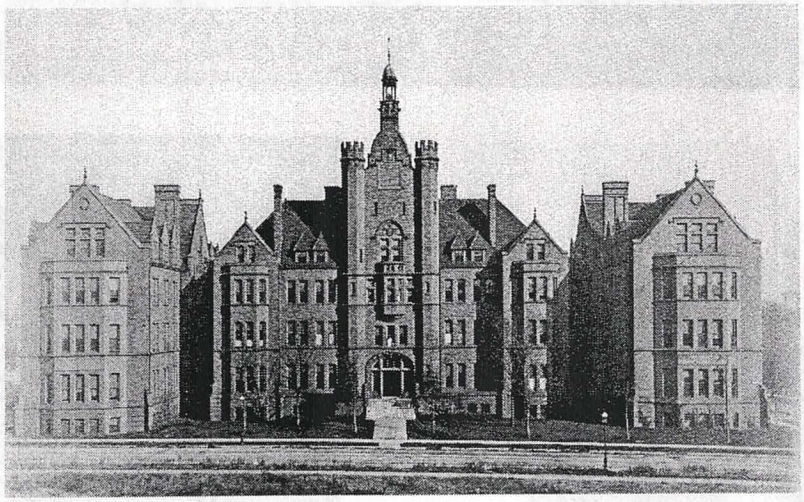
Samuel N. Crowen (1872-1935), the designer of the Benson Apartments, was born in Germany and emigrated as a boy to the United States. After a few years in New York, Crowen moved to Chicago and worked for several of the City's larger architectural offices, including that of Solon S. Beman. In 1894, Crowen established his own practice, and the Benson Apartments, built a year later, was one of his earliest independent designs.

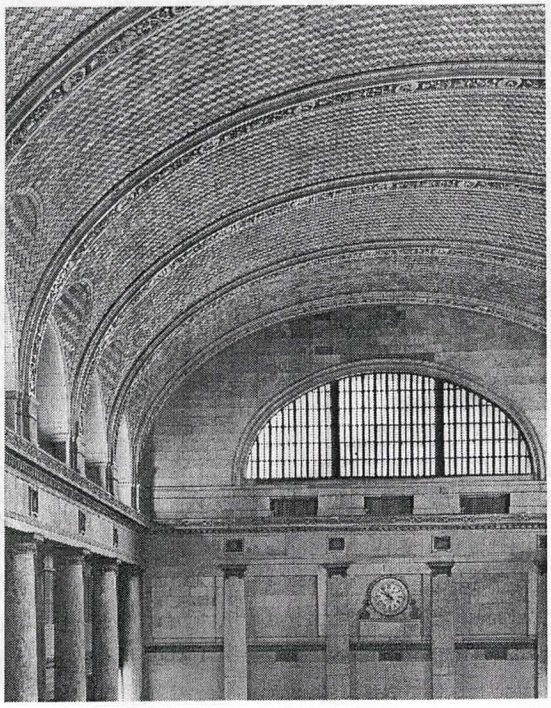
Crowen became known for his apartment building designs, especially those built in the early 1900s in the Sheridan Park neighborhood on Chicago's North Side. (Several of Crowen's buildings are contributing buildings to the Sheridan Park Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) He also designed the Biograph Theater (a designated Chicago Landmark) in 1914. Crowen also designed several downtown office buildings in the early 1900s, the most prominent of which is the 36-story Willoughby Tower at 8 S. Michigan Ave. (1929), located within the Historic Michigan Boulevard Chicago Landmark District. He also designed the Hudson Tower in Minneapolis.

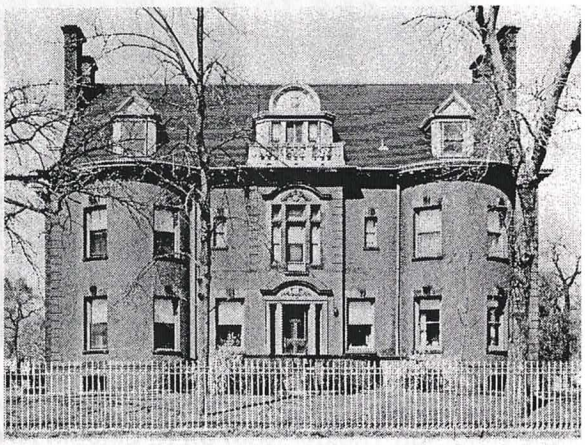
Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2 120 620 and 630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.









Charles Frost designed a number of significant buildings in Chicago, either individually or with partners. These include: (top) the Newberry Library facing Washington Square (designed with Henry Ives Cobb); (middle) the Home for the Friendless on S. Vincennes (demolished); (bottom right) the John Lord House at 4857 S. Greenwood Ave. in the Kenwood Chicago Landmark District; and (bottom left) the Chicago & North Western Railway Terminal (designed with Alfred Granger; demolished)

Samuel Crowen designed, besides the Benson Apartments, the Biograph Theater (top) on N. Lincoln Ave. (a designated Chicago Landmark); and (above and right) the Willoughby Tower at Michigan Ave. and Madison St. (located within the Historic Michigan Boulevard District).

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Mid-North District Extension be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois or the United States.

- The Mid-North District Extension, including the Cobden and Benson apartment buildings, exemplify the high-quality residential architecture constructed on the Chicago's North Side in the Lincoln Park neighborhood during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- The Cobden and Benson apartment buildings possess refined designs and high-quality craftsmanship similar to the character of the late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings contained within the Mid-North District.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Mid-North Extension, including the Cobden and Benson apartment buildings, contains handsome and significant residential buildings that exemplify the quality of design, detailing, materials, and craftsmanship of late 19th-century buildings in Chicago.
- The Cobden and Benson apartment buildings are fine examples of the Romanesque Revival and Classical Revival styles, both styles of significance to Chicago architecture.
- The buildings exhibit fine craftsmanship in both materials and detailing, utilizing brick, stone, pressed metal, and terra cotta.

Criterion 5: Important Architect

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Mid-North Extension, including the Cobden and Benson apartment buildings, are the work of Charles S. Frost and Samuel N. Crowen, architects significant to the history of Chicago architecture.
- Charles Frost, the architect of the Cobden Apartments, was the architect for several now-demolished significant Chicago buildings, including the Chicago and North Western Railway Terminal (designed in partnership with Alfred H. Granger) and the Home for the Friendless.

- Surviving buildings by Frost include several houses in the Kenwood Chicago Landmark District, the Walker Library in the Morgan Park neighborhood, and the Newberry Library (designed in partnership with Henry Ives Cobb).

- Samuel Crowen, the architect of the Benson Apartments, designed the Biograph Theater (a designated Chicago Landmark) and the Willoughby Tower (part of the designated Historic Michigan Boulevard District), as well as several apartment buildings in the Sheridan Park Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Criterion 6: Distinctive Theme as a District

Its representation of an architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other theme expressed through distinctive areas, districts, places, build-ings, structures, works of art, or other objects that may or may not be contiguous.

- The Mid-North District Extension, including the Cobden and Benson apartment buildings, exemplifies the historic theme of the existing Mid-North District as a group of high-quality 19th- and early 20th-century residential buildings of significance to Chicago history.

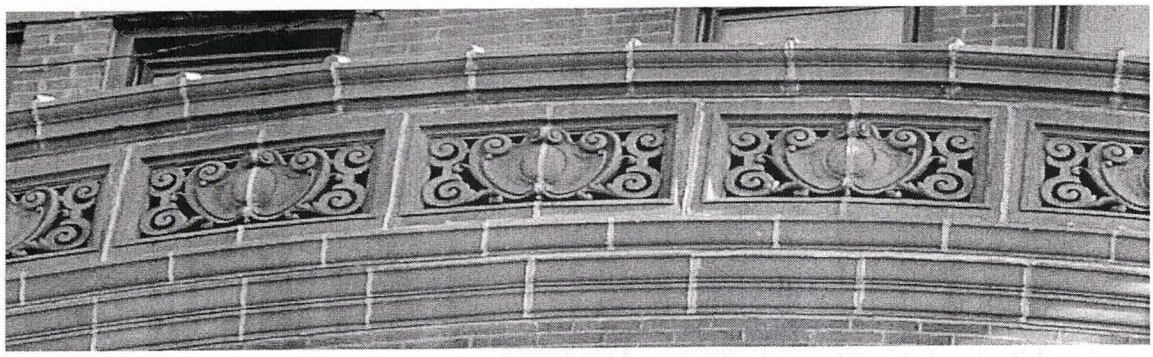
- The Mid-North District Extension consists of a building type, overall architectural styles, visual forms and building details that are consistent with the historic visual character of the Lincoln Park neighborhood and with the age, style, scale, building setbacks, design, size, building forms, use of materials, and overall detailing of buildings within the existing Mid-North District.

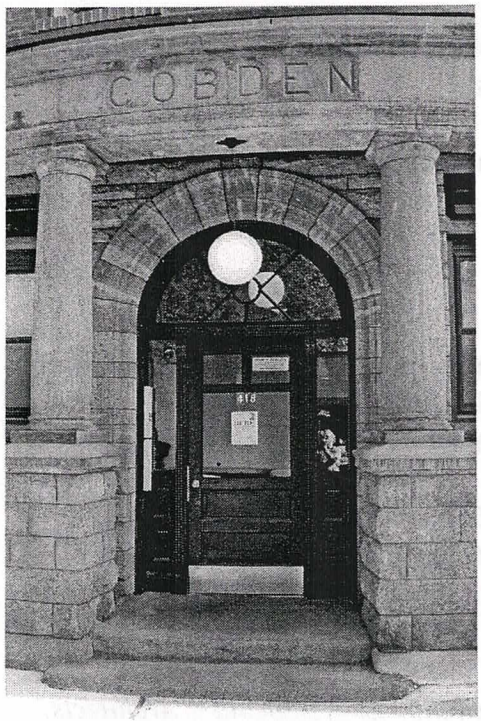
Integrity Criteria

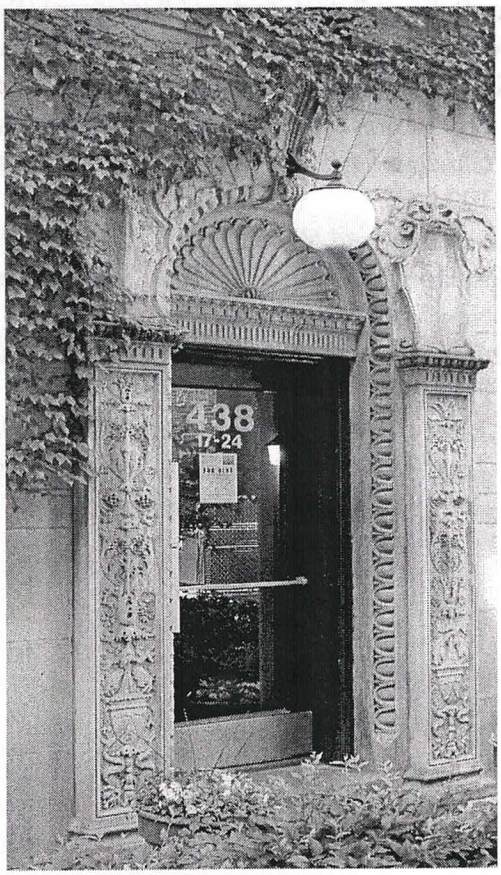
The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

The Mid-North District Extension possesses excellent exterior physical integrity, with its buildings retaining their original siting and relationship to the surrounding Lincoln Park neighborhood, and their original overall form and most exterior details.

Small exterior changes have occurred to the two buildings that comprise the Mid-North District Extension. Several windows in the Cobden Apartments have single-pane window sash, rather than the double-hung sash that would have been present when the building was constructed. In addition, the Cobden Apartments' retail storefronts have been modified to reflect more recent retail concerns. Overall, however, the buildings in the Mid-North District Extension retain the vast majority of their historic building fabric and reflect the visual character of the existing Mid-North District through their overall massing, building form, and exterior building materials, details, and craftsmanship.







The Cobden Apartments (top and middle) and Benson Apartments (bottom) are finely detailed in a variety of materials, including red brick, pink granite, and red terra cotta (Cobden) and yellow brick and gray limestone (Benson).

Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its preliminary evaluation of the Mid-North District Extension, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- all exterior building elevations, including rooflines, visible from public rights-of-way.

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Barbara Crane for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks: p. 4.
From *Grand Illusions*: p. 9 (bottom).
Chicago Historical Society: p. 13 (top).
From *Chicago at the Turn of the Century in Photographs*: p. 13 (middle).
Stephen Beal for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks: p. 13 (bottom left).
From *Hyde Park Houses*: p. 13 (bottom right).
Bob Thall for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks: p. 14 (bottom left and right).
Courtesy LakeWest, Inc.: p. 19.

The Cobden Apartments as they appeared soon after their construction in 1893.

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